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As in our training-school days we were not taught that hens had hysterics, we have not yet recovered from our astonishment, but neither have we ever been disturbed in any way. We sleep with every window and door wide open except in the coldest weather; the screen doors are hooked inside except when we forget it, and we confidently expect that the foolish hen was our first and last burglar.

CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE GAP *

By I. M. I.

For days previous I had baked cakes, icing and sprinkling them with most marvellous candy bought in Bat Cave's department (?) store, making stockings from mosquito net, and filling them with dolls, nuts, oranges, ribbon, candy, and toys,—all this for the nine little children in two cabins on the estate. My husband superintended the cutting down of a cedar, and on Christmas Eve we trimmed it with ornaments brought from home. It was six feet high. We moved it into the living room by our supper table, and when the candles were lit we felt really Christmasy. The Colonel, my husband and I enjoyed opening our gifts and reading our letters until midnight,—but I must get on to the tree, for, believe me, it was the first Christmas tree these children had seen.

The nine little ones were to come on Christmas morning at about eleven. The day was beautiful and sunny, so the tree was placed in the yard, and how strange it looked with its tinsel and trimmings, standing among giant oaks, thin poplars, and a huge fig tree. Suddenly, without a moment's warning, a hurricane, accompanied by heavy rain drops, upset our tree, scattering things round about with a vengeance. The excitement ran high for a while, but the tree was finally rescued and put in one corner of the porch.

I had hung on the lower branches Christmas cakes for the smaller children, three to six years of age, to take off themselves, and congratulated myself that all was in readiness when, looking out of the door, I saw the tree quiver and stealing quietly out, what do you think I saw? Five jet black cats, gravely nibbling the low-hung cakes. The sight was so unusual I laughed to myself and let them nibble for a time, but to-night five black cats are being swept along the course of the river, and I do hope they will not haunt me with their forty-five lives, for it was the Colonel who insisted they should be shot.

* This Christmas sketch was written for an *alumnæ* association by its president, in exile for her health.

Just as fresh sugar-coated cookies were hung, I looked up The Gap for my expected guests and counted seventeen adults and children,—only nine stockings, remember!

In fear and trembling I looked *down* The Gap to see if more were approaching, but I rose to the occasion and while my husband held their attention with the phonograph (the porch was filled) I hastily cut cake, and with two pounds of candy and three dozen bananas had something for everyone.

The hopeless, apathetic, lurid faces of those mountain women with their poor sometimes pretty children I am not likely to soon forget. They never laugh, and I could not tell whether they were pleased or otherwise. I have heard since that they never had such a Christmas, and the Colonel says they will talk of it for years, but at the time it was positively ghostly.

As I watched these mountaineers straggling along the side of the road to their dreary, oftentimes dirty, windowless cabins, I wished I could help ever so little, but they are so “sot” in their ways, the task would be a long, arduous one, if not absolutely hopeless.

IN ROOM NUMBER TEN

By T. D. PENDLETON

THE night nurse entered the hospital, hung up her heavy ulster, walked up two flights, and reported to Miss Carithers at exactly five minutes before seven o'clock. Miss Carithers was to dine out and see a play, but she was still in uniform. She looked at the clock and gave the special orders for the night hurriedly. Finishing, she said she hoped the entire charge of the patients would not be too heavy. One of the day nurses would come over from the home and sleep in the hospital if the night nurse wished it. The night nurse did not wish it; she would be able to manage alone, she said.

Miss Carithers went away to dress, accompanied by a curious sense of bafflement. She felt as if she had tilted against a mist and lost. One could never get close to the night nurse, she was a machine. But at fifteen minutes before eight Miss Carithers came lightly to the top floor again and said contritely:

“I must tell you that an unpleasant thing has occurred. We had an emergency operation this afternoon while you slept, one of the victims of the wreck. You did not hear of the wreck on *The Southern*? Of